Rushing River Provincial Park

Preliminary Management Plan 1985

Ontario
Ministry of Natural Resources
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Minister
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Deputy Minister

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this Preliminary Management Plan for Rushing River Provincial Park for your review and comment. This plan defines the park's classification, goal and objectives and is the proposed management strategy for Rushing River Park for the next 20 years.

To ensure that the management plan is responsive to the public interest, we are asking for your participation. If you have any questions or comments please forward them by April 18, 1986 to:

District Manager
Kenora District
Ministry of Natural Resources
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Kenora, Ontario
P9N 3X9

Your participation will help us in refining this preliminary plan leading to the completion and approval of the management plan for Rushing River Provincial Park.

D.B. McGregor
District Manager
Kenora District

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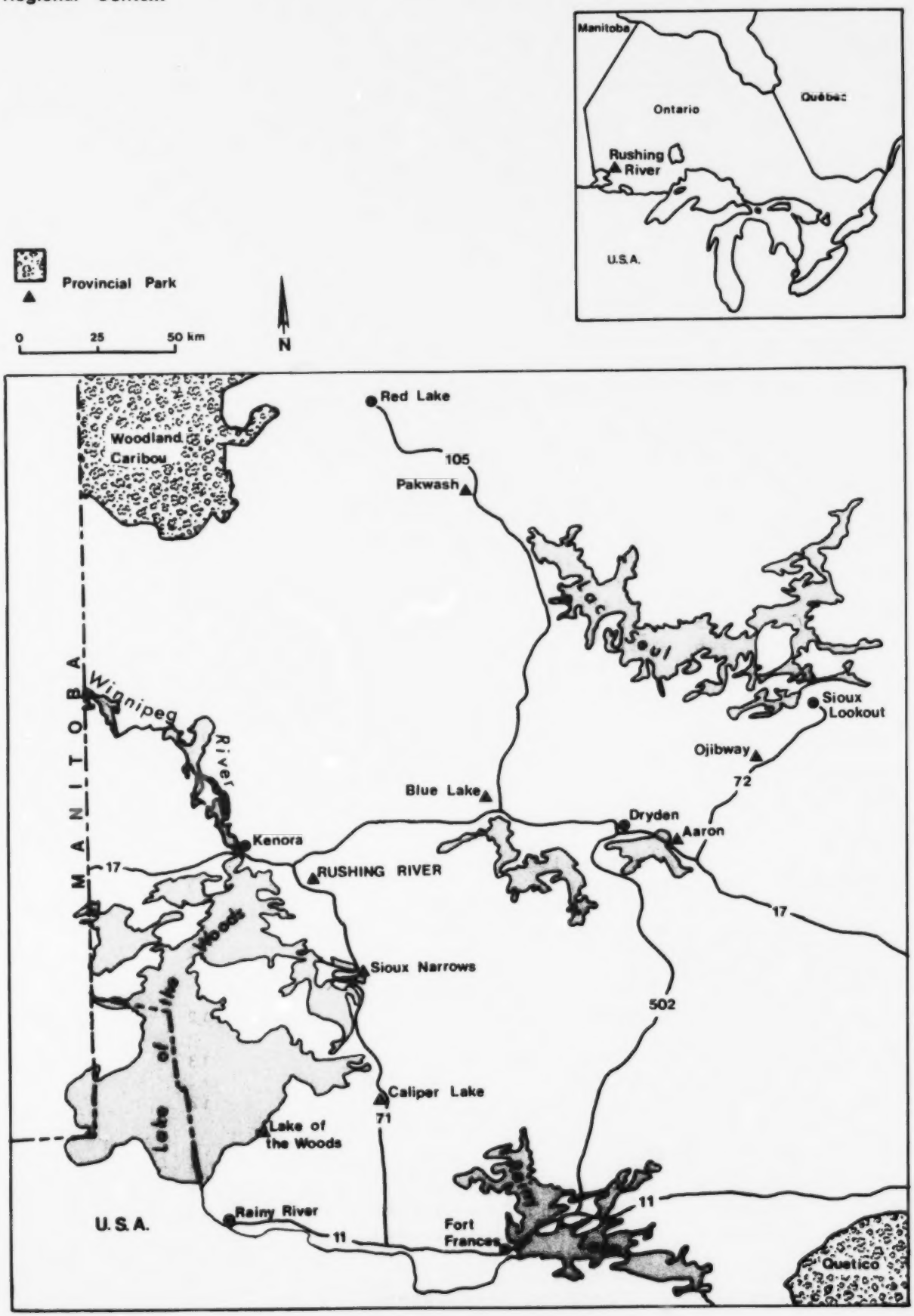
figure 1

Regional Context



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rushing River Provincial Park is scenically located along a series of rapids on Rushing River and on the shore of Dogtooth Lake. The park is situated approximately twenty kilometres southeast of Kenora on Highway 71 (Figure 1). It was put into regulation in September 1958 at a size of 190 hectares. This plan has been developed consistent with the Kenora Distict Land Use Guidelines.

Typical of much of the Canadian Shield country of Northwestern Ontario, the park is located on moderately broken granite bedrock with little soil cover, under a tree canopy of jackpine and aspen. These characteristics are representative of Hills' Kenora Site District of the Lake of the Woods Site Region. Although the park exhibits typical boreal vegetation, it is in the Northern Transition Zone of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence and Boreal forests, and species native to the southern forest grow in the park. Bogs in various stages of development are found within deep bedrock depressions. In contrast to the hot, dry conditions of the bedrock outcrops, low lying areas have dense undergrowth and a cool microclimate.

Rushing River Provincial Park offers a wide range of recreation opportunities including walking, cross-country skiing, swimming, boating and fishing. Recreation facilities in the park include two interpretive trails, seven groomed cross-country ski trails, three docks, two boat launches, three beaches and 191 campsites. The campground has 38 electrical sites, a comfort station and showers. Rushing River flows through the day use area, which is a very popular picnic spot for both residents of the area and tourists travelling the highway.

The park's interpretive program and its facilities, including the museum and interpretive trails, provides both recreation and education opportunities.

Rushing River is an intensively used park with an 80% - 90% occupancy rate during July and August. The majority of campers are families from Manitoba.

2.0 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Park Expansion

The addition of the Stokes Lake and Lower Rapids areas to the park will consolidate park facilities, and will provide for the preservation and interpretation of these two areas in the future.

Campground Expansion

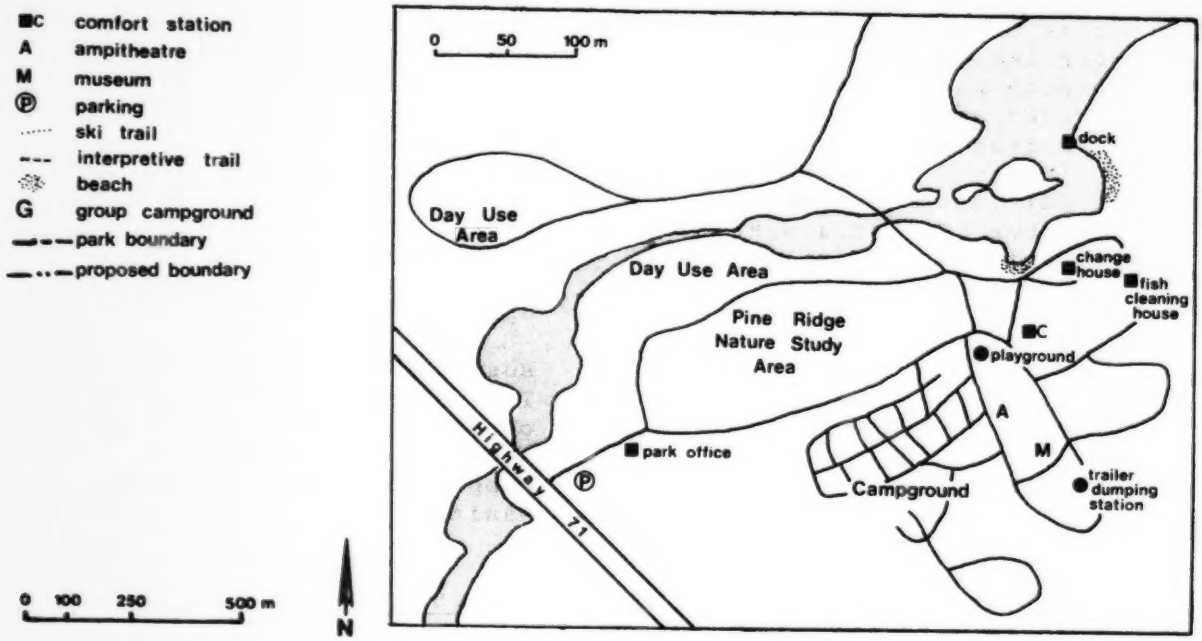
The development of more campsites in the north campground area is an option being considered. This expansion would provide more camping space during the busy months of July and August.

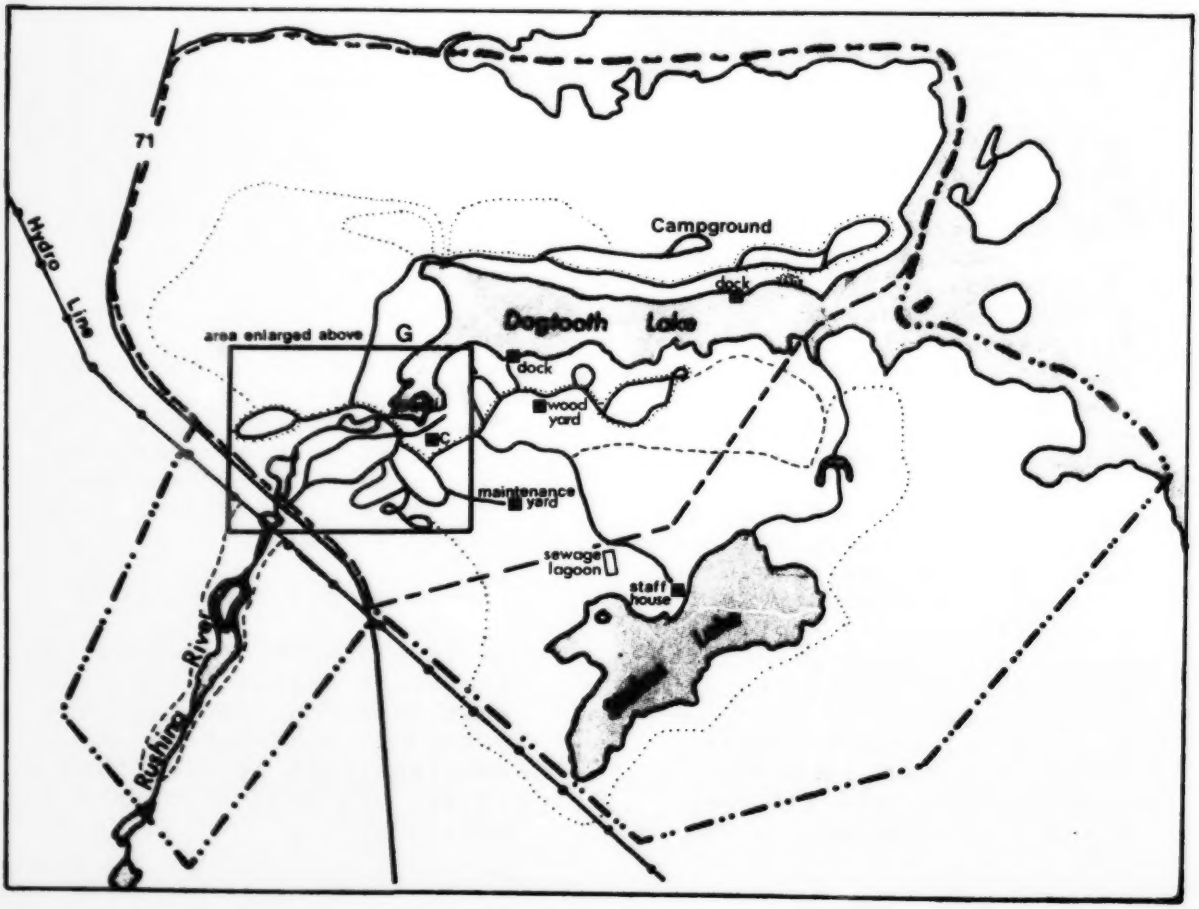
Campground Deterioration

The development of vegetation management and campsite rehabilitation plans and the subsequent restoration of campsites will correct the present degradation of the campground.

figure 2

Existing Development





3.0 CLASSIFICATION

Rushing River is classified as a Recreation Park. Recreation Parks are areas which support a wide variety of year-round outdoor recreation opportunities for large numbers of people in attractive surroundings. This classification recognizes that Rushing River offers a number of alternative activities in which park visitors can participate, in a setting of picturesque river rapids flowing from a lake surrounded by rocky shores and jackpine stands. The management plan for Rushing River has been developed in accordance with the recreation class guidelines as set out in the Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies.

4.0 GOAL

The goal of Rushing River Provincial Park is to provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities within the scenic natural setting provided by Rushing River and Dogtooth Lake and to maintain the natural beauty of the park.

5.0 OBJECTIVES

Ontario provincial parks have four objectives: to protect the province's natural and cultural resources, to provide recreation opportunities, to provide the opportunity to appreciate the province's heritage and to promote tourism. The role of Rushing River Provincial Park in fulfilling these objectives is outlined below.

5.1 Protection

- to protect provincially significant elements of the natural and cultural landscape of Ontario.

The bogs and jackpine stands on bedrock outcrops are characteristic of this area of the province. The park is part of the transition zone between the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence and the Boreal forests. These characteristics will be maintained through zoning and management policies.

5.2 Recreation

- to provide outdoor recreation opportunities ranging from high-intensity day use to low-intensity wilderness experiences.

Rushing River Provincial Park annually provides the following recreation opportunities:

Day Use	15,000
Car Camping	50,000

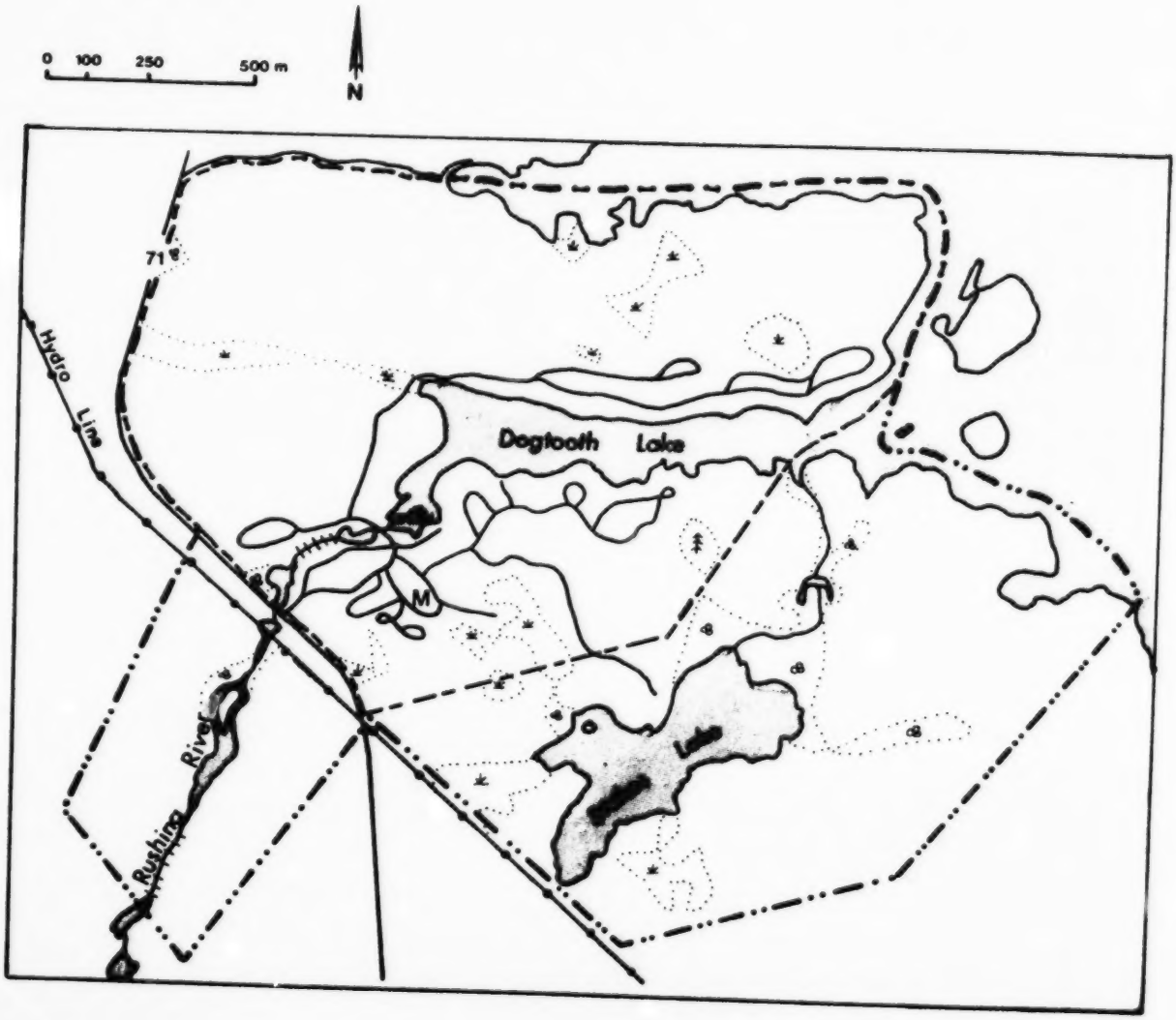
The park's day use area takes advantage of the rapids of Rushing River to provide a scenic backdrop for the activities that are enjoyed in this area including picnicking and swimming. The campgrounds follow the shore of Dogtooth Lake and nestle amongst the jackpine and aspen which forest the park.

The park's facilities contribute to the recreation objective by providing opportunities for both high and low intensity recreation.

figure 3

Natural and Cultural Features

bog
marsh
mature spruce bog
rapids
M museum
park boundary
proposed boundary



5.3 Heritage Appreciation

- to provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the outdoor natural and cultural heritage of Ontario.

Self-guiding interpretive trails offer an unstructured opportunity for visitors to appreciate the natural features of the park. The visitor services program will also provide information about the natural and cultural history of the park through guided walks, displays in the museum, audio-visual programs and other special programming.

5.4 Tourism

- to provide Ontario residents and out-of-province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the Province.

The park will provide day use and camping opportunities for travellers. It is an important weekend and vacation destination for the majority of its users who are from outside Ontario.

Park visitors spend a significant amount of money in the park vicinity and therefore benefit the economy of the Kenora Region. The average camping group spends about $175.00 in the area during their stay. (O.M.N.R. 1983)

6.0 BOUNDARY

It is recommended that the Lower Rapids area of Rushing River and the area around Stokes Lake, totalling 173 hectares, be included in the park. The park facilities will then be consolidated as the staffhouse, sewage lagoon and some major parts of the trail system are outside the existing park boundary (Figure 2). The addition of these two areas will ensure their future use for low-intensity recreation and will provide expanded opportunities to interpret the park's natural and cultural history.

All of the land proposed for addition is Crown land and is part of an exclusion from the Boise Cascade Lake of the Woods Forest Management Agreement. There is presently no mining claims or staking activity occuring on this land.

figure 4

Zoning

Development Zone

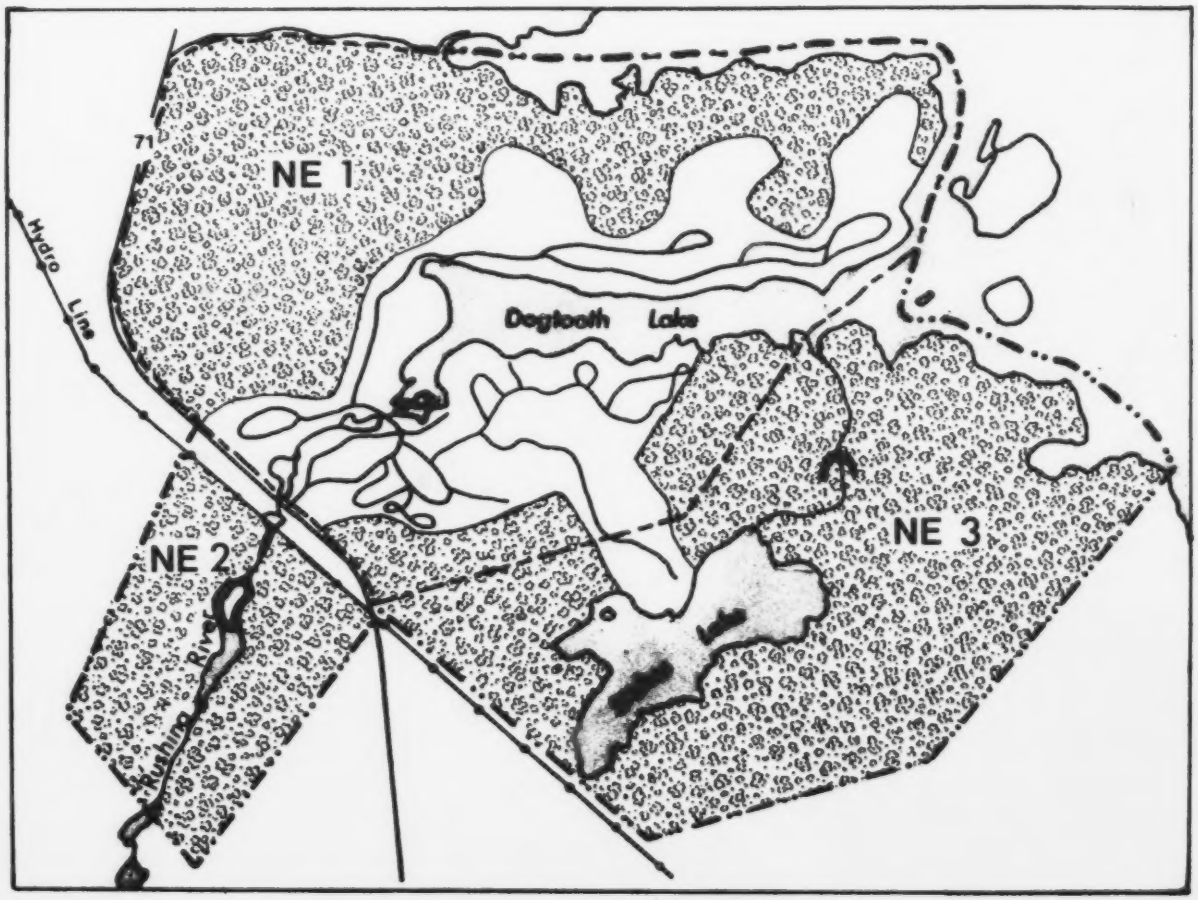
Natural Environment Zone

park boundary

proposed boundary

0 100 250 500 m

N



7.0 ZONING

Two types of zones are designated to guide the management of the park (Figure 4). Three natural environment zones recognize the parks natural features and the development zone recognizes those parts of the park which are developed or are capable of supporting proposed development.

7.1 Natural Environment Zones

One natural environment zone, NE 1 (82 ha.) covers much of the area in the north part of the park including the jackpine uplands, a number of small bogs and other wetlands.

NE 2 (35 ha.) covers the proposed addition southwest of Highway 71 around Rushing River. This lush river valley setting with its cool microclimate is in marked contrast to the hot dry conditions of the jackpine uplands. This part of the river can be divided into two sections with differing characteristics. The upper part of the river is wide and slow moving with a sandy clay bottom. Vegetation along the river edge consists of grasses and sedges which provide an ideal habitat for waterfowl. The lower section of the river flows quickly over bedrock outcrops and has steep rocky banks.

NE 3 (113 ha.) covers the area around Stokes Lake and some undeveloped shoreline on Dogtooth Lake. The marsh/bog environment of Stokes Lake has excellent interpretive potential.

These zones provide for extensive recreation and also protect areas sensitive to development. They will be managed to maintain their natural character. Development will be limited to trails and minimal interpretive facilites.

7.2 Development Zone

One large development zone (88 ha.) covers all areas of existing and proposed development including the campgrounds, day use areas, park roads and administrative facilities. Parts of this zone exhibit symptoms of overuse including exposed tree roots and soil compaction. These areas require rehabilitative work including vegetation plantings and soil rehabilitation. This zone will be managed to ensure that it is maintained such that it will continue to provide the opportunity for an enjoyable recreational experience.

8.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The park will be managed in accordance with the ministry's planning and management policies for recreation class parks. Specific direction, where needed to meet the requirements of Rushing River, is outlined below.

All planning and management will recognize that the different resource components are interrelated and that an integrated approach will be required in order for the park to achieve its objectives.

8.1 Landform

Natural environment zones have been established to protect the bedrock uplands and the bogs of the park. Within the development zone, the Pine Ridge Nature Study area will be protected. Measures to reduce erosion on the ridge will be undertaken.

Levelling of campsites and adding sand to maintain the beaches in their present state will continue on an ongoing basis in order to maintain the park's recreational facilities.

8.2 Vegetation

All wild fires burning within the park will be suppressed in order to protect park values. Wherever feasible fire suppression techniques will be used which will have a minimal impact on the park environment.

Where forest insects or disease seriously threaten park values, spraying may be permitted. In such a case, spraying will follow Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Environment guidelines.

In the development zone, forest rehabilitation and tree planting of native species will be undertaken to improve buffering between campsites and to rehabilitate areas devoid of natural regrowth. Where specific trees are necessary for aesthetics, shade or buffering, they may be fenced to protect them from beaver activity. A vegetation management plan will be provided to guide these projects.

In the natural environment zones, forest succession will progress unimpeded. Where safety hazards exist along trails, trees will be removed in association with regular trail maintenance and brushing.

8.3 Water

Dogtooth Lake is the source of the park's water supply. Water will continue to be tested according to approved Ministry testing procedures.

The two dams on Rushing River will be maintained in a safe condition.

8.4 Wildlife

There will be no hunting in the park.

Where bears become a nuisance and pose a danger to park visitors, they will be removed from the park in live traps, or tranquillized by Fish and Wildlife personnel, and relocated away from the park.

If the activities of beaver threaten park values they will be trapped under the supervision of the Ministry's Fish and Wildlife Branch.

8.5 Fisheries

Fishing for smallmouth bass, yellow pickerel and pike occurs in Dogtooth Lake. The park offers access to the lake with two boat launches and three docks. The Ministry's Fish and Wildlife Branch is carrying out a program to improve the lake's fishery. Projects include improvements to spawning beds and establishing a splake population in Dogtooth Lake.

8.6 Cultural Resources

The park museum, built in 1935, will be protected and maintained in a sound condition. It will continue to be used as the park interpretive centre.

9.0 VISITOR SERVICES

The visitor services program through the components outlined below, will give park visitors the opportunity to gain an understanding and appreciation of the park's environment, its objectives, and how management will meet those objectives.

A Visitor Services Plan will be developed to guide the interpretation of the park's natural and cultural history. This plan will be guided by the (Draft) Regional Visitor Services Plan.

9.1 Information

Information concerning park facilities, visitor services programs, provincial park regulations and the natural and cultural environment of Rushing River will be conveyed by the use of brochures, Ministry publications, newsletters and by vocal contact between park staff and visitors. Points of interest, facilities and events in the area will be communicated to the park visitor. Visitor comments and reaction will be solicited by park staff.

9.2 Interpretation

Through printed material, self-use facilities and visitor services staff the park's natural and cultural history will be interpreted. Self-guided exploration on park trails, in the Pine Ridge Nature Study Area and attendance at park interpretive programs will be encouraged. Park interpretation will focus on the following themes: glaciation of Precambrian granitic bedrock, marsh/bog ecology, river ecology, early contact site (natives-traders) and the transition forest.

Personal contact in the park museum, audio-visual programs at the amphitheatre and guided walks will be the major contact components of the visitor services program. Self-use of the museum, interpretive trails and displays will form the self-use components of the program.

The current interpretive facilities will be expanded with the addition of a display post to describe the park's geology, located in the day use area, and the addition of an interpretive/hiking trail around Stokes Lake.

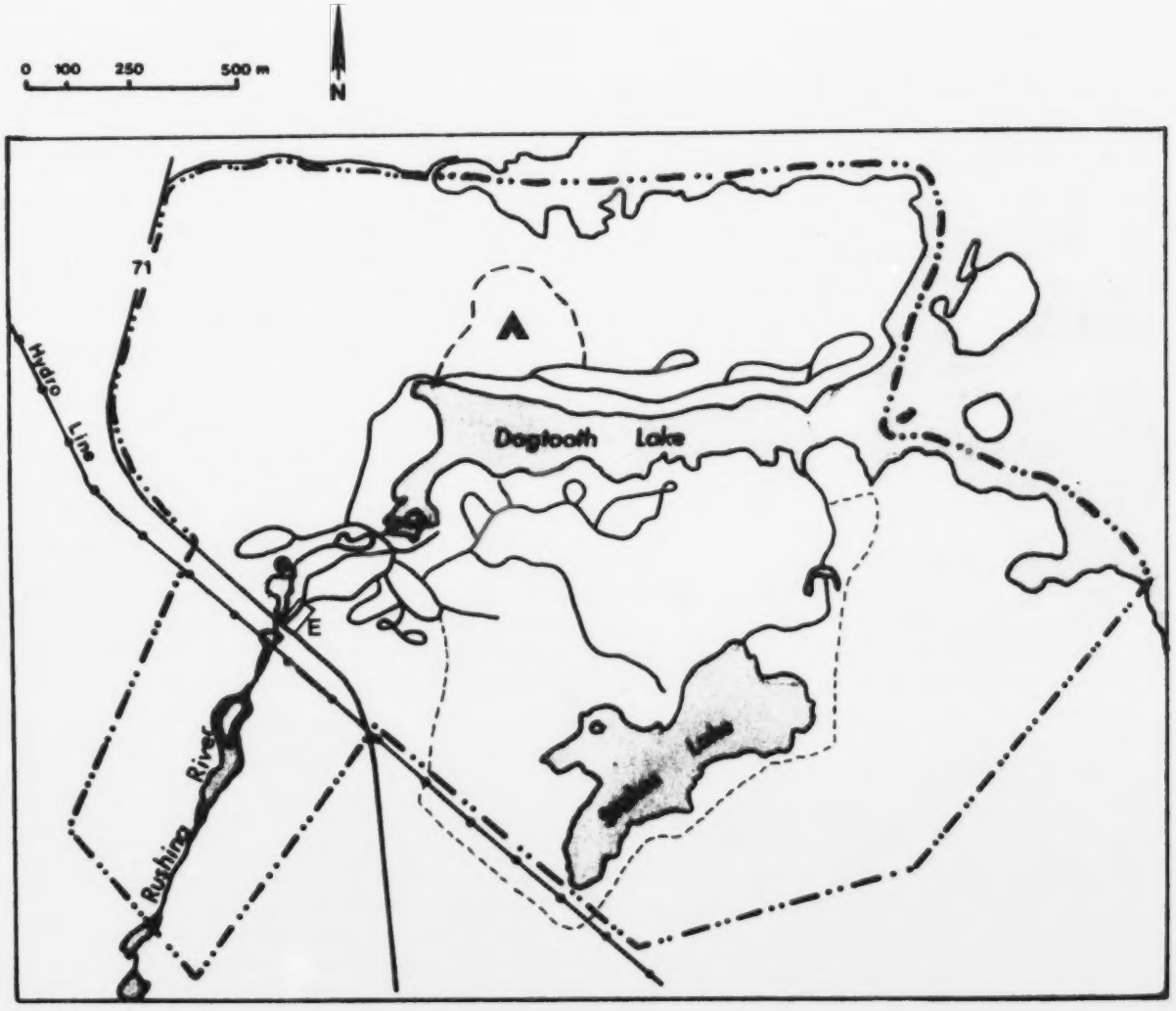
9.3 Outdoor Education

The park museum will continue to be made available to school and other groups for nature study. Resource information will be made available to teachers and group leaders.

figure 5

Proposed Development

trail
E entrance development
geology signpost
campground expansion
proposed park boundary



9.4 Recreation

Staff will inform park visitors about recreation opportunities available to them. Outdoor recreation skills programming may be developed to assist visitors in fully experiencing those opportunities.

10.0 MARKETING

Because Rushing River is used to capacity during July and early August, a marketing program will concentrate on encouraging campers to visit the park during June, late August and early September, when use is lower. The promotion of other parks in the area to relieve some of the pressure on Rushing River will also be part of the marketing program. Winter use of the park for cross-country skiing will be encouraged. A marketing plan will be developed to guide this program and it will recognize that the existing level of use during July and August will be maintained.

11.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development will proceed in order to meet the objectives of providing recreation opportunities, the opportunity for heritage appreciation and the promotion of tourism.

Development will be consistent with Figure 5. It will follow the guidelines outlined below and approved site plans.

11.1 Campground

The campground may be expanded by approximately 30 sites. This development would take place off the north campground road. It would include some walk in tent sites, similar to others along the lakeshore, and vehicle campsites. A site plan will determine the exact location and number of campsites.

A comfort station will be developed in the north campground area regardless of whether the campground is expanded. This will require the construction of a sewage disposal system. Site planning will determine the best location for the comfort station.

11.2 Trails/Interpretive Development

The Stokes Lake ski trail will be developed for use in summer as an interpretive/hiking trail. The trail will highlight parts of the Stokes Lake marsh.

To provide some interpretation of the park's geology an interpretive signpost will be erected in the day use area. The signpost will describe the history of a particular bedrock exposure.

11.3 Access & Parking

The development of a vehicle circulation plan to improve access and decrease congestion at the park entrance will be undertaken.

Additional vehicle parking will be created in both campground areas. The location of parking lots will be determined by a circulation plan.

11.4 Recreation Facility

A fish cleaning house will be constructed in the north campground area.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The programs and developments recommended by this plan will be implemented based on the priority of each project. As the park is well developed, the development of one of the following projects is not usually dependant on the completion of another. Therefore, some of the projects may be developed concurrently. The number of projects to be completed or partially completed in any given year will be based upon the availability and allocation of each year's funding. All development work will follow approved site plans and Environmental Assessment Guidelines. All day-to-day park activities will be guided by an annually updated operating plan.

The management plan has a life span of twenty years and will be reviewed not less than every 10 years following its approval and as the need arises. Data collection and environmental monitoring will be conducted regularly.

Projects
(in order of priority)

- boundary change regulations
- circulation plan
- vegetation management plan
- campsite rehabilitation plan
- park entrance redevelopment
- additional vehicle parking
- visitors services plan
- comfort station and sewage disposal site plan
- design and produce geological signpost
- lay out and develop Stokes Lake interpretive trail
- comfort station and sanitary system construction
- proposed campground site plan
- campground development
- fish cleaning house site plan and construction

Ongoing Projects

- vegetation planting in campground and campsite rehabilitation

13.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

People are invited to provide their comments on this plan. Those who have previously made their interest in the management plan known, will receive a copy. The Background Information and this plan are available through the Ministry of Natural Resources district office in Kenora.

To date, public comment with regard to park expansion has been favourable. Campground expansion has some support although concern exists that such development could impede the business of private campground operators. The sensitivity of the park, and campground deterioration is also a concern. The manner in which these issues are resolved in the Final Management Plan will, in part, be determined by public input on the Preliminary Plan.

The Final Management Plan is scheduled for release in July 1986.

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